Report to the Washoe K-12 Education Foundation

Annual Evaluation 2015-16

August 2016

Developed by Social Entrepreneurs, Inc. (SEI) and the Office of Family School Partnerships

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Parent University is a project of Washoe County School District (WCSD) and is coordinated through the Department of Family-School Partnerships. On behalf of the District and the Department, the commitment of community partners is gratefully acknowledged. WCSD, school personnel, community organizations, and families are working together to promote academic achievement for all Washoe County children and youth.

2015-16 Community Partners
Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows
Community Services Agency – Head Start
Education Alliance of Washoe County
Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)
University of Nevada Reno (UNR) – Cooperative Extension
Washoe County Library System
Nevada PEP
Gifted and Talented Parent Connection (GTPC)
Sierra Nevada Journeys
University of Nevada, Reno - College of Education
The Center for Student Cultural Diversity - University of Nevada, Reno
KNPB
GEAR UP – University of Nevada, Reno
Nevada PTA

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Department of Student Services
Department of Assessment
Department of Counseling Services
Volunteer Services
Department of Child & Family Services
Department of English Language Learners & World Languages
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Striving Readers
Department of Gifted and Talented
RISE Academy for Adult Achievement (RISE is part of WCSD)
Department of Multi -Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Parent University is made possible by funding through **the Washoe K-12 Education Foundation** with grants from the **Nell J. Redfield Foundation, E.L. Cord Foundation, and the Mathewson Charitable Trust.** This evaluation report is also made possible by funding from the Striving Readers Grant.

Importance of Parent University

"I think [Parent Universality is] really important, for various reasons. I have lived in this state for eight years, but I still did not know what my rights are as a parent. I believe my child has needs that are not visible to the eye or auditory to the ear, but as a parent I see them…. Parenting is a difficult task but it's even more frustrating when you have a child that's not following through….I think classes like this really help us to know where we're going. I didn't know there was a virtual pre-k out there that my child could be on a computer getting pre-k at home and helping her prepare for kindergarten."

Parent Interview
Family Access Day, 2016

Report Summary

The mission of Parent University is to help families build upon skills, knowledge, and support systems to advocate for their student's success. Since 2011, Parent University has provided learning sessions at schools and community-based locations in Washoe County to fulfill its mission. This report demonstrates program outcomes and identifies opportunities for continuous improvement using information from the 2015-16 program evaluation.

> "I just wish for them to keep doing this. Keep helping the parents, educating them, and getting all this great information, so that children can make it to college and university. That they know that there is a lot of resources to help them."
>
> **Parent Interview**
> **FAD 2016**

2015-16 Parent University at a Glance

Together with 14 Community Partners and 12 District Departments, Parent University:

- Offered **499** learning sessions across the district in **55** academically-focused topics;
- Held **two full-day Family Access Days** at the University of Nevada, Reno where families learned strategies to support their child's pathway to college;
- Engaged **2,216** unique participants. The students of these families represented the district's diverse population; and
- Connected with **2,549** students through one or more family participants.

Participants rated quality and usefulness very highly:

- 92% described learning session *usefulness* as outstanding or above average, and 93% described learning session *quality* as outstanding or above average. These rates were the highest measured since the program started in 2011.
- 99% of survey respondents indicated that they would recommend the session to another parent.
- 34% of participants retrospectively rated their knowledge in the subject area as high or very high (rating of 4-5 on a 5 point scale) *before* the learning session. After the learning session, 93% rated their knowledge as high or very high. Improvements were noted in every category measured, including skills, confidence, and awareness.

Key Findings

- The program's participation goals were partially met, with overall attendance exceeding the target, and individual parent and student attendance below the targets set.
- Parent University successfully reached diverse families including (but not limited to) the district's racial and ethnic minorities, participants with limited English proficiency, families of children with special needs, and families experiencing poverty. This is a key success in Washoe County and from this perspective, Parent University is a model for other districts across the nation. Staff noted that grant funding for a project coordinator helped to increase attendance during the second half of the year.
- Participants expressed strong satisfaction and gratitude for Parent University learning sessions. Nearly all participants would recommend the class to another parent or family. They reported strong gains in knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness. Open-ended responses to surveys were most often expressions of thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to attend.
- As noted above, ratings of quality and usefulness were the highest that they have been since Parent University began. Staff identified the *teacher on special assignment*, a program enhancement, to help explain this change. This person worked with the team to ensure curriculum was well-aligned to classroom teaching, that classes were interactive, and that curriculum was accessible and clearly presented.
- Families suggested classes in academic areas such as math and reading, as well as other areas such as social emotional learning, bullying, and safety.
- Some challenges existed in migrating data from existing tools to internal databases in 2016-17; however, progress was made in abilities to provide real time access to both schools and Parent University staff.

Recommendations

- In developing goals for 2016-17, the capacity to reach more students given existing resources should be considered. Higher rates of attendance may require enhancements to staffing, systems, or both.
- Recruitment continues to be challenging for many schools. Families have indicated strong support for the program through

Report Summary

evaluation interviews and surveys; these families can be powerful advocates for Parent University given tools and venues to share and promote.

- Continue to improve data systems to be able to provide real-time data to schools and Parent University personnel. Utilize evaluation to enhance the program's theory of change and identify any new questions to be answered moving forward.

- Parent University is one of several intentional strategies to help families engage in their children's education. Parent University may benefit from being intentionally connected to other activities for families, through a pathway of activities that nurture families' support of their children's education.

- While the majority of classes suggested by families are offered by Parent University, some were outside of the scope. Parent University instructors could help to address family needs by sharing information about upcoming Parent University classes as well as other adult educational opportunities offered in our community.

Background

About Washoe County School District (WCSD)

WCSD in Nevada is one of the largest districts in the nation, serving more than 63,100 students in the last year (Nevada Department of Education). The district has 63 elementary schools, a special

District-Wide Improvements

According to We Are WCSD: "Graduation data shows the District continues to make progress in narrowing achievement gaps among most student groups since 2012, including:

- Graduation rates for Black/African-American students rose 24 percentage points, from 42% to 66%.
- Graduation rates for Latino/Hispanic students rose 14 percentage points, from 53% to 67%.
- Graduation rates for Children in Transition rose 16 percentage points, from 37% to 53%.
- Graduation rates for children living in poverty rose 12 percentage points, from 53% to 65 percent.

In addition:

- Graduation rates for Native American/American Indian students rose four percentage points over 2014.
- Graduation rates for students enrolled in special education classes rose two percentage points over 2014."

Report Summary

education school, 14 middle schools and 13 comprehensive high schools. Most of the district's population is within the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area; schools also serve the communities of Incline Village, Gerlach, Empire and Wadsworth.

The district's student and family population is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2014-15, nearly half of all students (45.7%) were white (non-Hispanic). The second largest ethnic group was Hispanic/Latino, making up 39.5% of the total, followed by students that were two or more races (5.5%), Asian (4.3%), Black or African American (2.3%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1.64%), and Pacific Islander (1.1%). Among individual schools, the racial and ethnic make-up of the student population may differ considerably. For example, the percentage of students that were white, non-Hispanic ranged by school between 7.3% and 83.1% in 2014-15.

Graduation with connection to college and careers is a critical focus for WCSD. In recent years, the district has worked to enhance graduation rates, and seen progress both overall and among groups that have been less likely to graduate compared to the overall population.

Families experience circumstances that influence their connection to their child's school and education including children's special needs, limited English proficiency, and access to the resources. Student data shows that in 2014-15, more than one in ten (13.1%) students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); 16.0% of students were English Language Learners (ELL); and 48.2% were served through the Free/Reduced Lunch Program (FRL), a proxy for poverty.[1] Similar to the racial and ethnic makeup of individual schools, district

> "Well, they're very helpful, very informative.
>
> They gave [us] great tools to work at home."
>
> **Parent Interview**
> **FAD 2016**

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[1] The free/reduced price lunch data are frequently used by education researchers as a proxy for school poverty since this count is generally available at the school level, while the poverty rate is typically not available. Because the free/reduced price lunch eligibility is derived from the federal poverty level, and therefore highly related to it, the free/reduced price lunch percentage is useful to researchers from an analytic perspective. It is important to note that the rate of eligibility in free/reduced price lunch is typically larger than the actual poverty rate (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015).

Background

averages mask differences in neighborhoods and schools. For example, the percentage of students with FRL varied last year from less than 2.5% to 100%.[2]

Parent University as a Strategy to Reach Families

Parent University was envisioned, planned, and implemented in 2011 to help families engage with their children's learning. Through the support of the district, qualified staff and outside investment, Parent University has completed its fifth year. The WCSD Office of Family-School Partnerships led planning and implementation of Parent University. Each year, program staff members have worked to improve and develop the program, retaining core components and also changing strategies to help more schools, families, and students benefit from the investment.

Parent University is founded on an understanding that all families want their children to be successful, but they may not have the tools and knowledge to support them in reaching their academic potential. Program staff and participating schools engage parents and other caring adults to build knowledge and skills that support student educational success. While learning sessions are open to all families, Parent University intentionally works to engage families that have been traditionally underserved or hard to reach. They accomplish this by providing classes at schools (an accessible location), take down barriers (including language and child care), and use multiple strategies to connect and inform families about Parent University offerings.

This year Parent University continued efforts to lower attendance barriers. As in previous years, interpreters were available and translated materials were provided in order to assist families that speak Spanish as their first language. On-site child care was also offered for young children. In some classes children and youth participated alongside their parent or family member. For two Family Access Days at UNR, transportation assistance was provided.

Attendance goals have been set as part of program planning with the Washoe K-12 Foundation. In 2015-2016 Parent University strived to reach the following goals:

1. Reach at least 2,900 unduplicated family members through Parent University offerings.
2. Reach 6,600 total participants (including parents that attend more than one class).
3. Reach 3,200 total students.
4. Ensure that at least 60% of families were considered "hard to reach." A large percentage of the students that WCSD serves are members of "hard to reach"

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[2] Hunsberger ES had 2.5% enrolled in FRL. The following schools had 100% in FRL: Allen ES, Anderson ES, Booth ES, Cannan ES, Corbett ES, Duncan STEM Academy, Greenbrae ES, Hug HS, Kate M Smith ES, Lemelson STEM Academy ES, Lincoln Park ES, Loder Academy ES, Mariposa Academy, Mathews ES, Natchez ES, Risley ES, Smithridge STEM Academy ES, Sun Valley ES, Traner MS, and Veterans Memorial STEM Academy (Washoe County School District, 2015).

Background

populations. In the context of public education, a "hard to reach" population is a group that has either been traditionally underserved by the educational system, or is difficult to involve in public participation [(Doherty, Stott, & Kinder, 2004) (Brackhertz, 2007)].

"Hard to reach" families were defined as families with students who fell into one or more of the following demographic categories:

- Have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)
- Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- Racial or Ethnic Minority
- English Language Learners

Methods
Parent University engaged SEI to evaluate the program. SEI used a mixed method design with several activities:

- Administered retrospective post-tests (surveys) administered at the end of Parent University sessions.
- Synthesized sign-in and demographic data provided by district.
- Interviewed participants at one of two Family Access Days.
- Held **two** focus groups with parents and caregivers to gain their perspectives about Parent University. A total of 15 parents and caregivers participated in the focus groups.
- Reached **31** principals and teachers through an online survey to learn about their perspectives about the program. A total of **8** principals and teachers responded to the survey.

 "Well, for me [Parent University is important] primarily because you learn things to which you sometimes are not paying attention at school, and it is good to know new things for a better future for the children and for yourself, too.

"Pues para mi [Parent University es importante] primeramente porque uno aprende cosas que realmente a veces en las escuelas no está uno al pendiente, y es bueno saber cosas nuevas para … para un futuro mejor para los niños y para uno mismo también."

Parent Interview
FAD 2016

Background

Results

Student Demographics

WCSD families of students that are of racial and ethnic minorities were well represented among Parent University participants when compared to the district.

Comparison of Race and Ethnicity in Parent University and District

	Parent University Demographics*	Representation in District (2014-15)**
Hispanic / Latino	54.4%	39.5%
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	30.0%	45.7%
Multi-racial	5.8%	5.5%
Asian	4.1%	4.3%
African American	3.2%	2.3%
American Indian	1.8%	1.6%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	1.1%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=1,681.**Data on the district is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

Families with students receiving Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL), families of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and families with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) were well-represented using district rates for comparison.

Comparison of Special Student Populations in Parent University and District

	Representation in Parent University (2015-16)*	Representation in District (2014-15)**
Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL)	53.7%	48.2%
English-Language Learner – ELL or Limited English Proficient (LEP)	26.8%	16.0%
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	14.9%	13.2%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=1,681 **Data on the District is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

Background

Participation Goals

A total of 7,576 participants were counted through sign-in sheets at Parent University offerings including both classes and two Family Access Days. Of this total, 2,216 were unduplicated parents representing a total of 2,549 students in families potentially impacted by their parent's participation.

Measure	Total Count	Goal	Definition and Method
% of Total Attendance Goal **115%**	7,576	6,600	Total Parent Attendance Based on Count of All Signed In
% of Unduplicated Parent Goal **76%**	2,216	2,900	Total Unduplicated Parent Attendance Unique Parents, Corrected with Duplications Removed for Multiple Classes Attended, Using Permanent Number
% of Student Goal **80%**	2,549	3,200	Count of All Students in Household using ID; Based on Total Unduplicated Parent Attendance

The program also set a goal that at least 60% of the population served would be considered hard-to-reach based on one or more factors. Hard to reach includes FRL Status, Racial or Ethnic Minority Status, Special Education (IES), or ELL Status. Parent University met this goal with at least 70% meeting one of the identified criteria.

- 27% of families attended Parent University had a child that has a designation of Limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- 54% of students whose parents went to Parent University families participated in the Free/Reduced Lunch Program (FRL).
- 15% of students whose parents went to Parent University are in special education programs (have an Individualized Education Plan - IEP).
- 70% of students whose parents participated were a race or ethnicity other than white.

Results

Participants Over the Years

Parent University has tremendously increased the number of parents reached through its six year history, from a total of 1,131 participants in 2011-12 to 7,576 in 2015-16.[3]

Parent's Participation 2011-2016
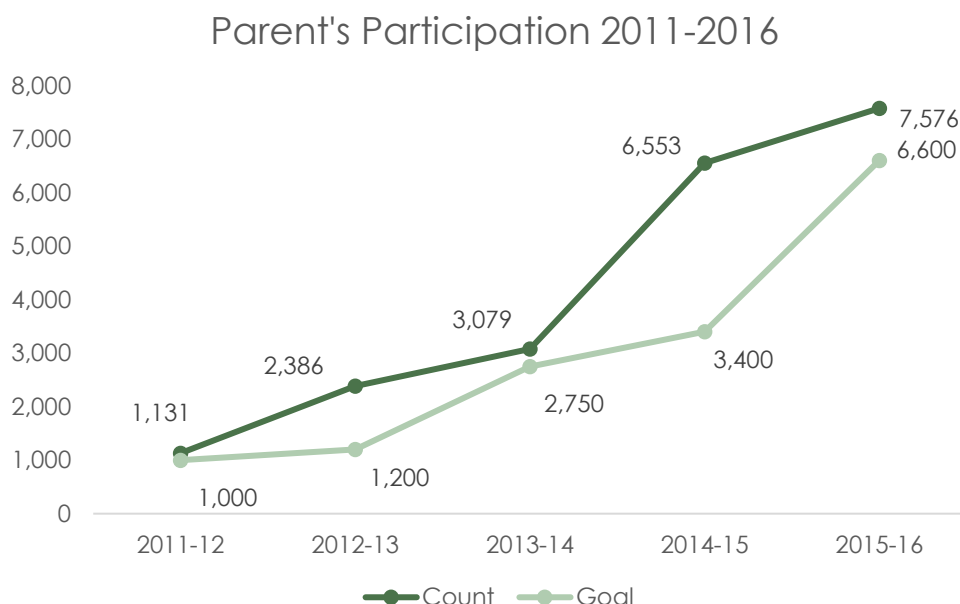
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Participation	1,131	2,386	3,079	6,553	7,576
Goal	1,000	1,200	2,750	3,400	6,600

Learning Sessions Offered

Parent University offered 499 learning sessions over the school year in 55 topic areas. The best-attended learning sessions were *Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare Your Child for College* followed by Family Story Teller, which were courses consisting of several classes. The top 10 best attended classes are shown below:

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[3] Changes to data collection took place in 2015-16. Comparison between years

Results

Top 10 Class Topics with Highest Overall Attendance	# of participants
Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare Your Child for College	4,447
Family Story Teller	543
Family Access Day	352
Passport to High School Success	226
Black Student Education Series	138
Data Night	174
Transition to Kindergarten	138
Setting the Bar High and Helping your Child to Reach it!	107
Promoting Literacy in the Home for Pre-Kindergarten to 3rd Grade	106
Books, Fluency, Letters and Sounds….Oh MY!	100

How Participants Learned about Parent University

Parents were asked how they learned about Parent University. School continues to be the main channel through which parents learn about Parent University, emphasizing the importance of site leadership in attracting participants.

Additional Class Suggestions

Surveys asked families for their suggestions for additional classes to be offered by Parent University. Of those that answered the question, math topics were by far the most frequently noted.
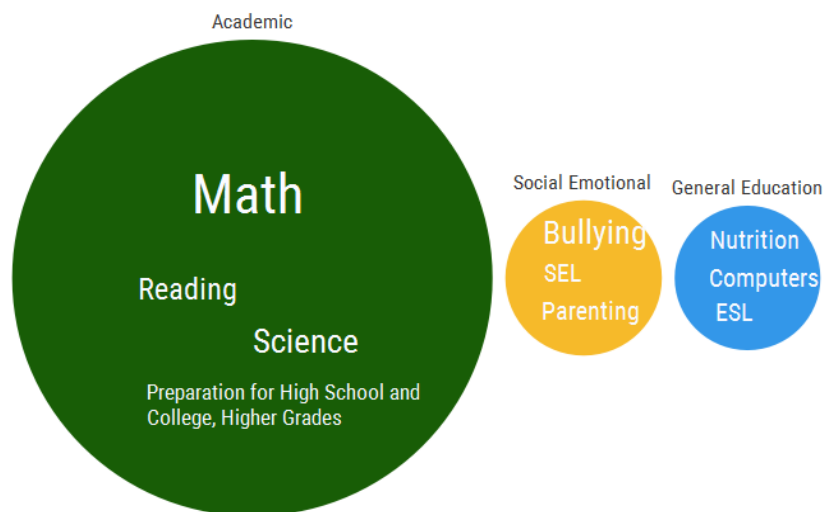

Participation Trends

More than two-thirds of participants (65%) attended just one class, and many (19%) attended two classes. Roughly two in ten (17%) attended three classes or more. Families

Results

with students across the age span were in attendance, with the strongest participation among families with the youngest students (pre-K through 3rd grade).
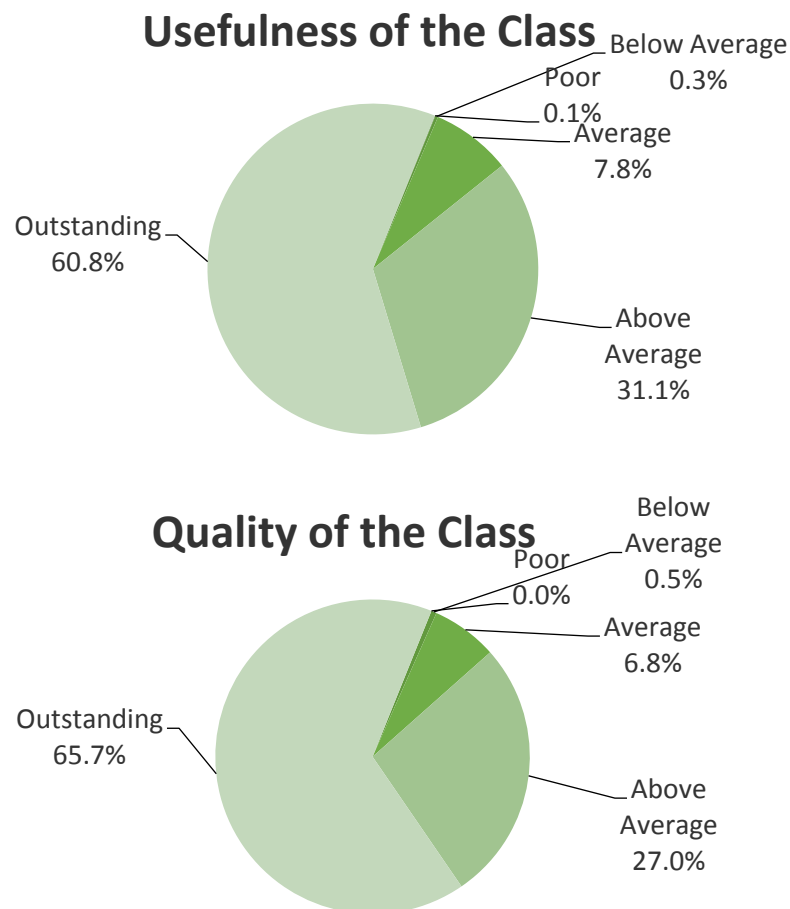
Survey Open Ended Responses

Participants were asked to offer open-ended comments in the survey. These comments were overwhelmingly positive, expressing gratitude for the opportunities provided by Parent University.
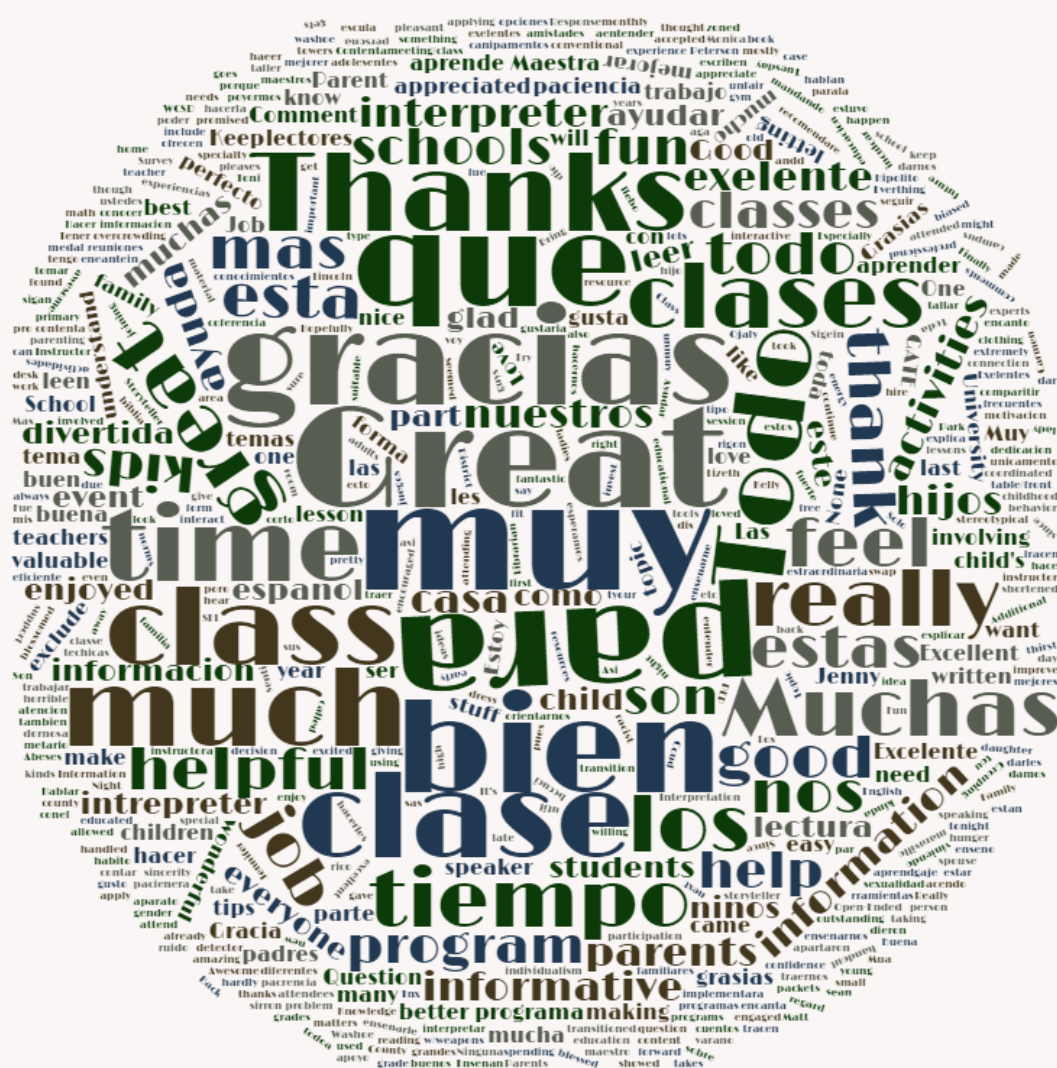
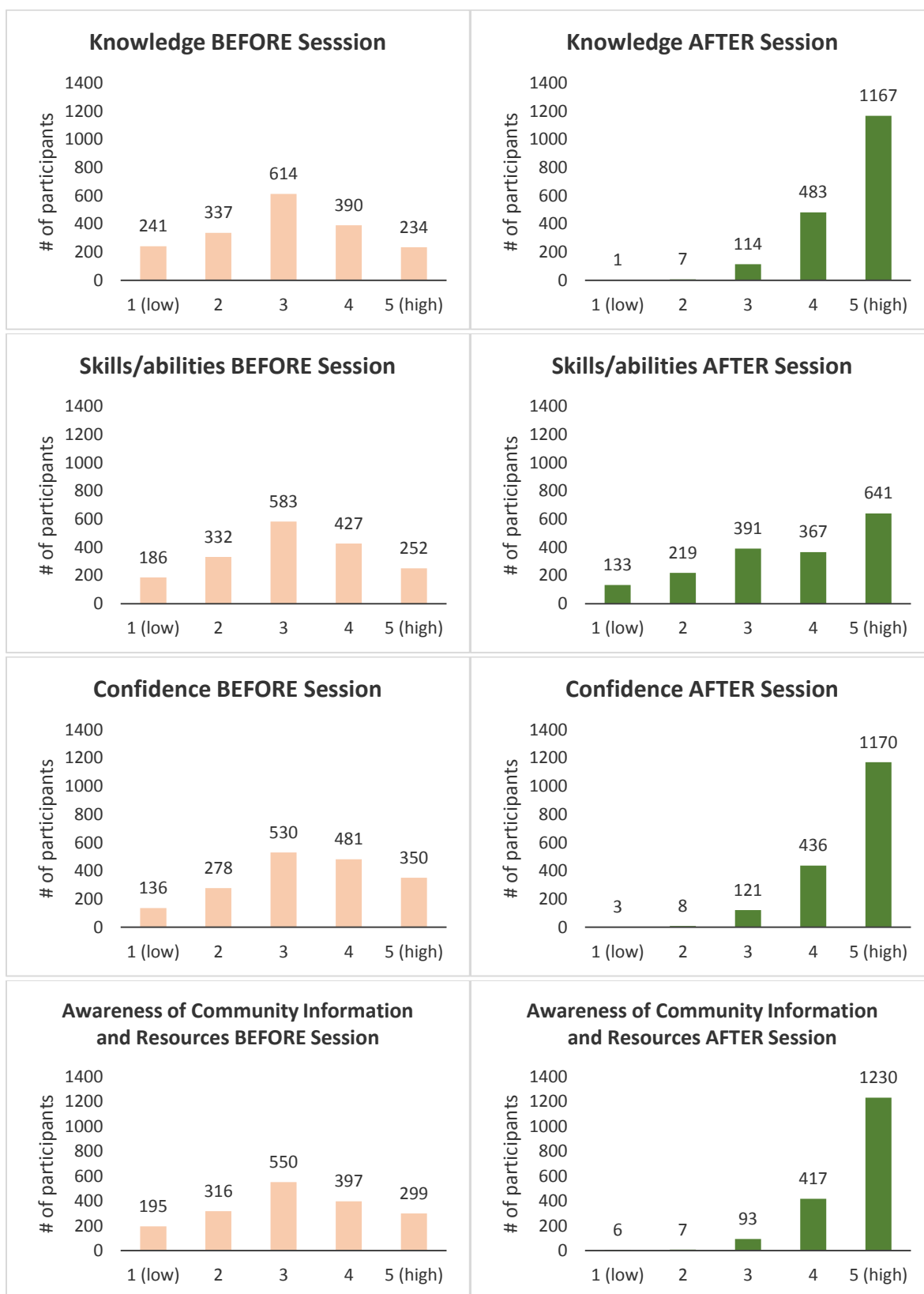
Created with wordclouds.com

Results

Perceptions of Parent University Class Quality and Usefulness

Nearly all respondents to the parent survey indicated that they would recommend the class to another parent (99.3%). Across all classes offered, families rated classes very highly in terms of quality and usefulness. The majority of participants (91.9%) described that class *usefulness* as outstanding or above average and 92.7% described the class *quality* as outstanding or above average. Note that these ratings of quality and usefulness were higher in 2015-16.

Usefulness of the Class

- Below Average 0.3%
- Poor 0.1%
- Average 7.8%
- Outstanding 60.8%
- Above Average 31.1%

Quality of the Class

- Below Average 0.5%
- Poor 0.0%
- Average 6.8%
- Outstanding 65.7%
- Above Average 27.0%

Self-Reported Changes in Knowledge, Skills, Confidence, and Awareness

Parent University class participants reported significant changes in knowledge, skills / abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources as a result of the class participation and topic. In the figures on the following changes, results from surveys are shown demonstrating considerable gains in knowledge, skills, confidence and awareness.

Knowledge BEFORE Sesssion

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
241	337	614	390	234

Knowledge AFTER Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
1	7	114	483	1167

Skills/abilities BEFORE Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
186	332	583	427	252

Skills/abilities AFTER Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
133	219	391	367	641

Confidence BEFORE Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
136	278	530	481	350

Confidence AFTER Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
3	8	121	436	1170

Awareness of Community Information and Resources BEFORE Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
195	316	550	397	299

Awareness of Community Information and Resources AFTER Session

1 (low)	2	3	4	5 (high)
6	7	93	417	1230

# of participants (y-axis label for all charts)

Results

Conclusions

Findings	Discussion and Reccommendations
Participation Goals	
The program's participation goals were partially met, with overall attendance exceeding the goal, and individual parent and student attendance below the targets set. Recruitment continues to be challenging for many schools.	• In developing goals for 2016-17, the capacity to reach more students given existing resources should be considered. Higher rates of attendance may require enhancements to staffing, systems, or both. Grant funding for a project coordinator during the second half of the 2015-16 school year boosted attendance at schools of focus; maintaining this position may help to sustain attendance. • Families have indicated strong support for the program through evaluation interviews and surveys; these families can be powerful advocates for Parent University given tools and venues to share and promote.
Reaching Diverse Families	
Parent University successfully reached diverse families including (but not limited to) the district's racial and ethnic minorities, participants with limited English proficiency, families of children with special needs, and families experiencing poverty.	• This is a key success in Washoe County and from this perspective, Parent University is a model for other districts across the nation. • Parent University is one of several intentional strategies to help families engage in their children's education. Parent University may benefit from being intentionally connected to other activities for families, through a pathway of activities that nurture families' support of their children's education. • Parent University has successfully reached many families considered "hard to reach" and is an asset to the community in being able to strengthen communication between home and school.
High Levels of Satisfaction and Program Quality	
Participants expressed strong satisfaction and gratitude for Parent University learning sessions. Nearly all participants would recommend the class to another parent or family. They reported	• Parent University has been an important asset and resource for families that utilize it. Sharing this information with school and community groups may help to garner additional support for Parent University, and, families themselves may

Results

strong gains in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and confidence. Open-ended responses to surveys were most often expressions of thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to attend.	be important ambassadors for Parent University. • Staff attribute increases to quality and usefulness ratings due in part to the work of the teacher on special assignment, who worked to ensure curriculum was aligned, interactive, and accessible. Parent University have a focus on continuous improvement, and employ new strategies to make programming.

Meeting Family Needs through Partnerships	
Families suggest classes in academic areas such as math and reading, as well as other areas such as social emotional learning, bullying, and safety.	• While the majority of "additional" classes suggested by families were offered by Parent University, some were outside of the scope of the program. Parent University instructors could help to address family needs by sharing information about upcoming Parent University classes as well as other adult educational opportunities offered in our community.

Strengthening Internal Systems	
Some challenges existed in migrating data from existing tools to internal databases in 2016-17; however, progress was made in abilities to provide school and real time access to data from the program.	• Continue to improve data systems to be able to provide real-time data to schools and Parent University personnel. Utilize evaluation to enhance the program's theory of change and identify any new questions to be answered moving forward.

Results

Results

Methodology and Limitations

Participant Surveys

After each learning session instructors provided participants an evaluation form. It is important to note that while there was strong participation in the survey, it was voluntary and not collected at every class or from every participant. A total of 1,880 class evaluation surveys were taken, out of which 1,033 were in English and 847 in Spanish.

Sign-in Data

At each learning session the instructor circulated a sign-in sheet. This was the main way that class participation was counted and validated. It is important to note that sign-in data is likely to be an undercount of true participation. Sometimes participants entered late and did not sign-in, and there were situations where instructors did not complete sign-in sheets. Changes to data management were made in 2015-16, and may impact comparisons to previous years.

Student Data

Using data from sign-in sheets, student information associated was requested from the data department and analyzed.

In-Person Interviews

SEI staff attended one of two Family Access Days (February 2016). Parent engagement in overall program processes and immediate outcomes of participants were observed. Participants were invited to be interviewed (n=10) in English (n=5) or Spanish (n=5) immediately following their participation in a class. Interviews in Spanish were conducted by Spanish-speaking staff.

Focus Groups

On April 20, 2016, SEI staff conducted two listening sessions at the Department of Family-School Partnerships' Facility. Parent engagement was observed during both sessions. Listening sessions were conducted, with one in Spanish (n=13) and one in English (n=2). The listening session in Spanish was conducted by a Spanish-speaking staff member. Results were analyzed a summarized in the Progress Report 2015-16.

Principals and Teachers Survey

An online survey was issued to 31 Washoe County School District principals and teachers. A total of eight surveys were completed by principals (5) and teachers (3). Results were analyzed and summarized in the Progress Report 2015-16.

Notes and Limitations

This evaluation should be considered with the following limitations:

❖ Comparisons to district data are typically separated by one year, with current data available for Parent University and the previous year's data available for the district as a whole.

❖ Test score comparisons were not available in 2015-16 due to changes in methodology and reporting.

❖ Sign-in sheets are the main source of participant data. However, sign-in data is not always complete. In some cases this is because some participants joined late and missed the sign-in sheet, or instructors may have forgotten to circulate it. This means that participant counts are conservative. Actual participation may have been higher than counted.

❖ Changes to tracking of participation in 2015-16 may impact comparability of data between years. While the basic data collection strategies remained the same, data was transferred to databases for maintenance and reporting. In theory, no differences exist and practices were put into place to clean data. However, it is possible that errors beyond what could be controlled exist within the data set.

❖ Participant surveys may be missing data (e.g., a person left a question blank). Percentages utilize the number completing the question (valid percent) unless otherwise noted.

❖ Not all participants answered surveys. In 2015-16, the percentage of surveys collected per participant was lower than in previous years.

❖ Information from individual interviews should be considered one source of information and not representative of all stakeholders. Quotes featured in reports may be corrected for grammar and punctuation.

❖ The total number of surveys completed by principals and teachers was small compared to the total invited. These perspectives should be considered important, but not representative of all teachers and principals in the district.

Methodology and Limitations

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